

Let's judge a magazine by its cover

A textual analysis of the covers of *Gadis*

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ABSTRACT

In this article, I analyse the covers of *Gadis*, a magazine for Indonesian teenage girls, from 2009 to 2013. Using textual analysis, I examine these magazine covers as manifestations of local gender ideology amidst pressures from a globalized market. The models on the magazine covers are the embodiment of ideal teenagers and they reflect the magazine's personification of Indonesian adolescents. Images of the models in conjunction with the article titles displayed on the covers construct dominant themes surrounding the lives of female adolescents. In this article, I argue that the dominant gender ideology is perpetuated by the magazine; however, the embodiment of the ideology is shifting from the girly adolescent image to that of a more mature and sophisticated young woman.

KEYWORDS

Teen magazine, gender ideology, magazine cover, female adolescent.

YOU CAN TELL A MAGAZINE BY ITS COVER¹

Many of the previous research on teen magazines focus on the content by doing an in-depth reading and semiotic interpretation of the text and visual representations. In this article, I examine the covers of *Gadis* because of several reasons. The first one is the importance of cover to attract potential buyers. It represents the magazine and builds the first impression. Covers can thus be seen as the highlight of the content. Viewing a magazine as a personified entity, the magazine cover is the face which is used to identify the body of the magazine. According to Goon and Craven (2003), the face has become

¹ The subtitle is taken from Kelley Massoni, *Fashioning teenagers; A cultural history of Seventeen magazine* (California: Left Coast Press, 2010), p. 52.

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